

## Blackwater and Burnham week 2018

The annual cruise down to the Blackwater attracted some 15 boats for the outward voyage with the first destination being Brightlingsea. After a pleasant evening in LV87 the fleet had a fairly leisurely start on Saturday morning in bright sunshine with a warm generally southern breeze. It was a good beat down the wallet in flat seaway with the tide under us.



The harbour team at Brightlingsea were on hand to meet us and did a great job in putting us all on the same pontoon at an excellent mooring fee including the cost of the ferry ashore for the evening. Colne Yacht Club were our hosts for the evening and the caterers did a fine meal.



Heybridge Basin was the next stop and with eager anticipation we set off to experience the new lock facilities which as organiser I was hoping would make life a lot easier for this venue. I am pleased to say that the new gates allowed eight boats in per lock. So two locks and everybody was in including a Dutch boat that tried to push in!

A very big thanks to Grant the lock keeper and his team of helpers. It seems that Blackwater Sailing Club always organise a very big regatta to coincide with the arrival of the HPYC fleet and it adds to the stress levels as dozens of dinghies of all different shapes and sizes whiz around tacking and gybing just as we are trying to hold station in the spring tides. Memo to cruise organiser, tell BSC to choose a different date next year!!



Once moored up in the Basin we could all relax and enjoy the ambience of this attractive location. I am sure the local pubs enjoyed our custom. The weather stayed kind to us and the BBQ that evening was a success.

The following day saw some shore side games played and John Hall entertained us with his very final HPYC quiz, special thanks to John who always finds an entertaining theme for the quiz and congratulations to Diva who won the main quiz and Flapjaq's who won the music element. Extra entertainment was provided by Sally with her dance routines!

After two nights at Heybridge the fleet headed off to Bradwell for one night with a view of heading around to Burnham on Crouch the following day.



Arthur the Harbour Master at Bradwell also did a good job squeezing our fleet into his very crowded marina and the Greenman pub in Bradwell village served excellent food that evening.

The next day we had to return to SYH due to a pre-booked family summer holiday, several other boats also decided to take this option. Most of the remaining boats decided to go back to Brightlingsea with Ariane staying in Bradwell for a few more days. This meant the Burnham excursion was cancelled which was a pity but in fairness it was a bit of an experiment to see if it was workable as destinations in the Blackwater estuary are quite limited for the numbers that we have on this cruise plus the general size of our boats.

The sail back to SYH was probably one of the best I have experienced this year with the wind strengthening generally from the south and wind against tide in Harwich Harbour kicking up a lumpy sea.

The boats that went to Brightlingsea had a very wet Thursday but entertained themselves with a boys v girls game of Yartzee and a fine Indian meal ashore that evening. An early start the following morning was followed by a good sail back to SYH to complete the week.

So another successful cruise down to the Blackwater and a very big thanks to everybody that joined in.

Bill and Marion Southgate  
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